***WHAT IS YOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY LEVEL?***



Learning another language is fun! But don't worry if you don't learn everything all at once. For most people, it takes a long time to feel comfortable conversationally and a lot more than that to learn how to read and write fluently. We’re talking years here, not weeks and months. Still, you will be amazed at how much you learn when you’re working hard and having fun! Which language are you interested in: Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Navajo? How about English? Below are the WIDA, AZELLA, and ACTFL guidelines mapping out what you should be able to do at each ability level as you start out or continue on your adventure as an English Language Learner! Most international students at the college level can expect to reach a bridging, advanced level (see the chart below) by the time they graduate from a four-year degree. Your instructors and educational programs will provide you with learning activities and classes at your language ability level. Most universities have intensive English academic programs, as well as tutoring, writing centers and other supporting resources for students of every major and concentration area. Your grades will also be based on what you can understand in English and all your subject/major areas (composition, math, history, science, etc.) according to each of the developing ability levels you will read about below:

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| Ability Level | Characteristics in  listening, understanding, talking, writing, and reading |
| ENTERING:  Pre-Emergent,  Novice Low | **So you don't understand? It's okay!** At first you won’t understand spoken English, and you won’t be able to write or read it either, but some people might know your language and will help you understand things.  Also, you can draw pictures and use facial expressions and gestures (movements of your head, hands, and body).  Find basic books with illustrations and very limited vocabulary. But don't give up; you need time and lots of practice to learn another language. Of course, you will need someone to translate this explanation for you! |
| BEGINNING:  Emergent,  Novice Mid and High | **Be patient! It will be frustrating sometimes because you will still understand very little spoken English.** But you will be learning a lot and all the things you are learning will get even more exciting. You will probably not have much knowledge of the English alphabet, but maybe your language has almost the same alphabet (like Spanish or Romanian). Also, you might understand some words that are associated with universal symbols, or graphics associated with a test, like in math.  Don’t forget, communicating with gestures or in a language other than English is okay.  You’re still “emerging” into the new language world! |
| DEVELOPING:  Basic,  Intermediate Low | **Wonderful!  You can understand a number of common words and phrases in English,** but don’t worry if you still need to rely heavily on gestures to express meaning. I know, I know, you want to speak like your friends who already know English but you’ll get better.  Remember it’s okay if you make mistakes or mix up your grammar.  English grammar is so different from what you already know so well in your own language. You will find that you are able to identify common objects in pictures, comprehend a little better, and follow simple directions for classroom activities. Also, you will be writing and understanding key words, phrases and short sentences.  You will even be able to have simple conversations and answer basic questions about things you read and hear in class at your basic English language level. |
| EXPANDING:  Intermediate Mid & High | **Yes! You understand better now when you hear common words and phrases on topics of personal relevance**; however, you may need frequent rephrasing, repetition, and contextual clues to increase comprehension.   You can independently write letters of given sounds.  You can respond to simple questions about books and classroom discussion at your intermediate English language level.  **BUT Don’t feel bad if you still make a lot of errors and still have trouble understanding everything.  Remember, learning a new language doesn’t happen in just one school term!**You can write (with support of your classmates, tutors, and teachers) numbers, letters, words, short phrases and sentences or complete short writing tasks.  Language experts have also found that there are really two stages you will go through here:  **“intermediate- mid**" and also "**intermediate-high,”** before you hit the next one:  Read on! |
| BRIDGING:  Not Perfect  Becoming more Proficient,  Advanced Low, Mid, & High  REACHING, Superior and Distinguished levels | **At this level, you’ve learned a lot!**  You are able to speak in short patterns of words and phrases using increasingly grade appropriate English.   You have the ability to use accurate, purposeful, yet restricted vocabulary needed to ask or answer basic questions. You can comprehend a range of expressions used to request personal details, direct classroom activities, identify people, objects, and events. You can interact with your peers in formal and informal settings, using English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.  You are able to recognize many common high frequency sight words.  You are able to comprehend many simple content area words and a few, more complex words using the aid of picture cues.  You are able to produce short, independent writing that uses basic grade appropriate English conventions with some errors and difficulty in naturalness of expression, and report events sequentially using a topic sentence and a concluding statement.  **You haven’t arrived yet, learning English or any language takes a lot of time, even multiple years, but you’re on your way!  You should be extremely proud of yourself.**  Oral & written communication reaching more highly advanced levels of fluency. **Woo-hoo!!!** |

Adapted by Tim Conrad, 2014

*\*Based on WIDA, AZELLA, and ACTFL second-language proficiency scales: World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA), & American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)*